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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effectiveness and student characteristics of several dual-credit (high school and college course credit) programs at Parkland College (Illinois). The original program, begun in 1991, was developed in coordination with three area high schools. A total of 32 high school students in the first cohort enrolled in the Associate in Manufacturing Technology program. However, by fall 1997, none of the students in this cohort had graduated from Parkland in any program. In fall 1995, in cooperation with another area high school, nine students were enrolled in a dual credit automotive technology course which offered a total of 12 credit hours. Five of the nine students continued their studies at Parkland College after graduating from high school. Later dual credit iterations involved other area high schools and other courses. In addition to students attending Parkland under formal agreements with area high schools, the study identified a second group of 339 students, some under age 16, who took courses for credit without having earned a degree from any high school. The paper identifies issues raised by these two different groups of students, such as college's legal responsibility for under-age students, limits on the number of college-level courses taken prior to matriculation, and issues of privacy when reporting grades between institutions. (DB)

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LOOKING FOR THE DUAL CREDIT STUDENT

and Finding the Under-Aged Student Ones

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In Fall, 1992 Parkland College began offering dual credit classes. The program had only limited success. None of the students enrolled in the initial program completed an A.A.S. degree in that program although several did eventually graduate. Based on stakeholder responses significant modifications have evolved. More than 400 students have participated in dual credit courses. The types of programs offered have significantly changed since FY 92. This report for general audiences addresses three questions: 1. Who are these students? 2. What courses are they taking? 3. What issues should community colleges be considering when there are many under aged students attending classes?

LOOKING FOR THE DUAL CREDIT STUDENT

and Finding the Under-Aged Student Ones

In 1991 Parkland College was one of the first community colleges in Illinois to began a program of offering dual-credit classes for selected programs. The concept of dual-credit was not new: in 1991 the Florida Community College System had nearly 18,000 students receiving both college credit and high school credit for attending the same class (Windham, 1998). Initially at Parkland, there were three area high schools involved in a consortium funded by the Tech Prep Initiative. Additional classes with other area high schools have subsequently been offered, and this delivery method for course work is one of the fastest growing segments of Parkland's market. A longitudinal study of this original cohort was initiated in Spring 1998 in an attempt to determine the success of the program. However, during this study another, a-related group of students was identified. This group consisted of students who were attending the College before graduation from high school. While this related group of students was known to exist, the nature and extent had never been documented.

This paper documents what was found for both groups of students. Two separate groups were identified in this study. Group One was composed of students who were or had been attending Parkland College under formal agreements with area high schools where formal credit was earned by the student from both institutions. Group Two (less of a group than a cluster) was composed of students attending Parkland who had not earned a degree from any high school. It is not known if students in Group Two can claim high school credit. For each group, three primary questions were addressed: 1. Who are these students? 2. What courses are they taking?

3. What issues should community colleges be addressing from having many under-aged students attending classes?

Group One: Who are They and What are They Taking?

The initial cohort group of students enrolled for dual credit were from three high schools nearest the College (Champaign Central, Champaign Centennial, and Urbana High) beginning in Fall 1991. A total of 20 students was selected by high school counselors and recommended by high school vocational education instructors. The initial intent of the program was to provide a time-shortened sequence for students such that they could complete an A.A.S. degree in less than the "normal" two-year sequence outlined in the College catalogue. The instructors of record were full and part-time community college faculty who regularly taught the courses offered. College faculty members, who were eligible for high school certification, provided supervision. Later, a high school faculty member was assigned to supplement supervision and instruction. Students were provided with texts and materials by Tech Prep funds. The fees for the courses were waived by the College. High schools that participated also received supplemental technology equipment grants related to this program.

A total of 32 students was involved in the project before it was canceled in Spring 1993. All students were enrolled in an A.A.S. Manufacturing Technology program. Students completing the entire sequence earned 23 semester credit hours. By Fall 1997 none of the students in this cohort had graduated from Parkland in any program although one had transferred to a university without formally graduating and one was still enrolled. A total of ten students continued to take classes beyond the 23 credit hours in the program.

Many difficulties were encountered in the initial attempt at dual-credit. Schedules for

four different schools posed interesting problems including problems associated with inclement weather. Some college faculty reported discipline problems such as noise. Community college faculty were not used to nor were they prepared to deal with student discipline of this type in college-level courses. Other problems arose during those times of inter-school sports rivalry -- particularly cross-town football rivalries. The initial program was canceled in Spring 1993 for several reasons. First, there was no agreed upon criteria for selecting new students. Second, one of the three original schools had no new students interested in the program. Finally, difficulties were encountered trying to make such a program available to other area high schools that might have been interested in participating. The College and the Regional Office of Education decided to channel Tech Prep Funds in other venues.

In Fall 1995 another area high school was faced with a dilemma. A longtime vocational instructor had retired and the school was unable to afford replacing that person. Rather than allow the program to die completely, the College was approached with a request to reinstate the dual-credit concept for this school. Initially, nine students were enrolled in an A.A.S. Automotive Technology program. A total of 12 credit hours was offered. Five of the original nine continued on at the College for additional hours after they had completed high school. Of this one graduated and two others are currently enrolled. Faculty members thought the second iteration was much more successful than the first.

Since the second iteration other programs and other area high schools have begun to participate. During FY97 a total of seven courses was offered in three different programs with a total of 40 students enrolled (unduplicated headcount). By FY98 those numbers had grown to 15 course sections in the three programs plus Developmental English. A total of 64 students

(unduplicated headcount) was enrolled. In Fall 1998, eleven course sections and in Spring 1999 ten were offered in either Health Careers or Engineering Science and Technology, serving 11 district high schools. Additional courses in General Education were offered including College-level Composition, Introduction to Psychology, and Anatomy and Physiology. In Fall 1998, ninety-one students, and 103 students in Spring 1999 were enrolled in the dual-credit sections. It is anticipated that this number will double next fall.

Group Two: Who are They and What are They Taking?

The second group of students is those who have not yet completed high school, but who are enrolled at the College taking classes for credit. These students come from many different towns and are probably taking courses at the college for many different reasons. In the period between FY94 and FY98 a total of 339 students who have not yet completed high school degrees enrolled for credit classes. Fifty-eight percent of these students were female; seventy-five percent were Whites, 12% were Non-Hispanic Black, 9% Asian or Pacific Islanders and 3% identified as "Other." Most of these students (77%) were between 17 and 20 years of age although a significant minority (22%) is under the age of 16. It is this later group that may pose special issues for the College.

Group Two students enrolled in a variety of courses. The most popular courses are those that would give the students a "head start" when they fully matriculate. Table 1 shows the distribution of the top ten most popular courses for this group. It should be noted that many of these classes are remedial/developmental in nature.

Issues Surrounding the Dual-Credit and Under-aged Student

Two different sets of issues need to be discussed. The first set deals with under-aged students attending college either for credit or not. The second set of issues directly concern students enrolled in for-credit courses, either through formal, articulated agreements or not.

Issues Related to the Under-Aged Student

The first set of issues deals with students attending the college who are under the age of 16. While the total number of credit hours generated by students in Group Two is not significant compared with the College as a whole for that period, the issues (real and potential) that arise from their attendance are significant enough to warrant discussion. The concern is magnified when under-aged students attend non-credit classes and workshops such as sports camps.

To understand the legal implications of under-aged students attending the college better, Dr. Paul Thurston of University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign was consulted. Dr. Thurston identified three areas of the law he considered important. The first area concerned the law of negligence and the standards that are applicable to college staff and employees. The second area is the contractual relationship between the college and minors. The third is the potential for student-to-student sexual harassment because of younger students attending.

According to Thurston (personal communication, March 24, 1998), the primary rule of law that applies to liability is one of the reasonable care standard -- namely that the college has a responsibility to provide a safe and healthy environment for its students. He notes that the age of an injured plaintiff can be a significant factor in determining comparative negligence. Thurston notes that "I can find no case in which a community college was found liable for not providing appropriate reasonable care for a minor under the age of 14." He does cite a case in Missouri

where a college was found liable. A second area of concern lies in a more broadly defined statute called the Government Tort Immunity Act. He notes that recently this act is being interpreted more broadly. Thirdly, Thurston notes that Illinois statutes indemnify employees against suits brought against them when the employee is acting within the normal scope of employment. Finally, Thurston points out that insurance are still the "best form of protection." Policies should be examined to ensure that they do not discriminate against students covered because of age. Thurston concludes the College must ensure that safety measures are in place, call attention to danger in the course syllabi, and that remind students of their own responsibilities to act appropriately is important and safely.

The second area of legal concern, when dealing with under-aged students is one of the contractual nature between the college and those students. Thurston calls specific attention to the fact that minors are not recognized as able to enter binding contracts until they reach the age of 18 (16 if emancipated). Thurston strongly recommends that agreements be made with parents or guardians speaking for their children. This recommendation has implications for many forms the college requires including applications.

The third area of legal concern with under-aged students is that of student-to-student sexual harassment. Under Title IX, the Office of Civil Rights has said that a school is liable for the conduct of students that create a hostile environment. Thurston notes that this issue is unsettled at this time. He cites a 7th District Court of appeals decision, Smith v. Metropolitan School Dist. of Perry Township (1997), that limits a school's liability for injuries suffered. The Supreme Court had not yet ruled on two related cases at the time of Thurston report. He did go on to note that "In the wake of the Smith decision there is less concern about personal and

institutional liability. There are still powerful personal and educational reasons to be concerned about sexual harassment and to be alert to the educational environment and the potential or real effect that this environment has upon student safety."

Issues Related to High School Aged Credit-Taking Students

One very important issue must be taken into consideration when offering dual-credit or even home-school credit courses for students. Senior institutions such as the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign have very strict limits about how many courses a student can take at the college-level and still be considered an entering first year student. This limit is usually less than one semester or from 12-15 semester credit hours. While this may not be a significant issue for students enrolled in vocational classes who have no intention of transferring to a senior institution before completion of an Associate's Degree, it could easily surprise students who are trying to get a "jump start" on college. Parents need to be made explicitly aware of these facts before students are enrolled for credit.

A second issue arises when classes are taught by faculty who are not regular employees of the college and where the classes may not be taught on the college site. The problem is essentially one of ensuring the quality of such experiences. However, as anyone who has ventured into the academic outcomes assessment arena will testify, determining quality on-campus with regular full-time faculty is no easy task. Because this is a new initiative, some would hold this approach to a higher standard.

A closely related issue involves the question of certification. ISBE governs certification for secondary classes and provides the basis for determining appropriate qualifications for vocational and career classes (the two thousand hours of work in the field rule). The faculty in

transfer courses must have significant graduate-level course work in the field in which they teach. This is often defined as a minimum of a Master's degree. No formal education courses are required for transfer-level classes. It is not clear who has jurisdiction and which rules of certification should apply for dual-credit transfer courses.

A final issue is the right of privacy and reporting grades between institutions. It is essential that the college maintain and report individual grades to the high school where the students are enrolled. It is maintained that this is a legitimate "need to know" and does not violate students' rights to privacy. The college has on file an opinion that the college can share individual students' college placement assessments with the sending high school based on the need to know if sufficient safeguards are in place to protect against undo disclosure. High schools are reporting that such information is very helpful.

Recommendations

Partially because of this study the Office of Institutional Research and Evaluation has made several recommendations for the college. Regarding under-aged students:

1. Credit-taking students not covered by dual-credit agreements must be 16 years or older.
2. Students taking courses not-for-credit must be at least 16 years or older unless accompanied by their parents/guardians.
3. Sports camps whose participants are younger than 16 should require and have on file signed parental agreements.
4. Staff providing instruction to students under aged 16 must agree to security background checks.
5. Students taking dual-credit or courses designed for the home-schooled should have

specific signed parental permission slips that clearly show awareness of potential limits on the numbers of college-level for entering class standings at senior institutions.

It is further recommended that the college undergo a through study to learn the number (current and potential) of home-schooled students who are using college services. Finally, the lack of common statewide reporting standards should be addressed by ICCB. It is not currently possible to identify, much less track, students who have been actively engaged in such programs as dual-credit or Tech Prep. While significant state resources have been spent on these activities, it is not possible to detect what, if any, long-term effect such programs have on students. Improved methods of classification could help in long-term tracking efforts. Potentially this could represent a significant new market for college courses. Such a study should examine what courses are most appropriate and what is most needed. Implications for relationships with local high school districts should also be explored.

References

Windham, P. (1998). High School and Community College Dual Enrollment: Issues of Rigor and Transferability. Journal of Applied Research in the Community College, 5(2), 111-115.

Table 1

Top Ten Courses for Non-High School Degreed Students FY 94-98

Course	Number of Students	Course Grade Level
Composition I	24	College
Reading	17	Remedial 7th-9th Grade
Algebra	16	Remedial 2nd Year HS Alegbra
Intro. Psychology	16	College
Geometry	14	Remedial HS Geometry
Algebra	14	College
Writing Review	13	Remedial
Reading	12	Remedial (Pre-college)
CAD	10	College
Aerobics	10	College